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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1238  
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
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RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 0139  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 0710  
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 0187  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1572  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0600  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BERLIN 000649

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/16/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [IR](#) [GM](#)  
SUBJECT: LEBANON: GERMANY SUPPORTS ARAB LEAGUE BUT  
RELUCTANT TO STEP UP ENGAGEMENT WHILE TALKS CONTINUE

REF: A. STATE 52061  
[1](#)B. BERLIN 608

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Jeffrey Rathke for  
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) PolM/C delivered Ref (A) demarche May 16 to Foreign Office A/S-equivalent Andreas Michaelis. (Foreign Minister Steinmeier is traveling, and State Secretary Reinhard Silberberg was unavailable to meet with A/DCM.) Post noted the statements issued over the past week by Chancellor Merkel and Foreign Minister Steinmeier and welcomed Germany's support for the Arab League. Michaelis said Germany supported the Arab League's effort and considered it to be a "unique window" of opportunity that might remain open only through the weekend. He offered his view that Hizballah had "burned its fingers" by using violence against Lebanese political forces and might be experiencing a feeling of "strategic weakness" that would compel it to make concessions in Doha. Foreign Minister Steinmeier released a statement May 15 (text will be emailed to EUR/AGS and NEA/ELA) welcoming the Arab League efforts. (Note: That statement also reads that "Now all sides are called on, at the talks that will begin in Doha tomorrow, to create the basis so that the political paralysis in Lebanon can come to an end." End note.)

[1](#)2. (C) We pointed out that German statements on Lebanon to date have not explicitly addressed the responsibility of Hizballah or its foreign sponsors Syria and Iran. Instead, they have expressed concern about the violence and called for respecting and defending the constitutional order, without identifying Hizballah by name. Further, some aspects of the Minister's statement above might be misinterpreted to suggest that the constitutionally formed government of Lebanon and Hizballah had equal responsibility for political progress. Michaelis said Germany had no doubt about Hizballah's responsibility and was not taking a position of equivalence. We asked whether Germany was deliberately avoiding naming Hizballah in its statements and urged Germany to make public statements to this effect. Michaelis said that public statements at this point could well disturb the Arab League-led talks, and thus be counterproductive. Germany's goal was to promote the best outcome of the Doha talks, and it believed that would best be accomplished by allowing the Arab League space to manage the talks in the coming days. Germany would not issue any further statements until then.

[1](#)3. (C) We asked for German support by engaging diplomatically, especially with the Arab League, along the lines in Ref (A). Michaelis repeated that Germany did not want to disturb the Arab League process through diplomatic

interventions. We argued that expressions of support, publicly and privately, for the legitimate government in Lebanon would strengthen the government's position and make a favorable outcome more likely; Michaelis rejected this and said Germany preferred to employ different tactics.

¶4. (C) Michaelis asserted that PM Siniora, in his May 9 conversation with Steinmeier (Ref B), had indicated complete satisfaction with Germany's approach, which Siniora reportedly said went beyond "lip service." Michaelis strongly suggested that only an appeal from Siniora would cause Germany to re-think its approach.

¶5. (C) Michaelis asked what the U.S. would do in the UNSC -- this is the second Foreign Office inquiry we have received in as many days on this topic. He asked that the U.S. keep Germany apprised of plans in New York.  
TIMKEN JR